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**Amnesty's Report: Investigative failure, the Weaponization of
Narrative and Portrait of Bias
(OLF-OLA Press Release)**

Gender-based violence is among the most heinous crimes in any society. Any sexual violence endured by women and girls in Oromia, and beyond constitutes a grave injustice that must be unequivocally condemned, independently investigated, and prosecuted. Wherever it occurs and whoever commits it, is indefensible. There must be no denial, justification, or minimization of crimes against civilians, particularly women. For too long, these abuses in Oromia have remained hidden, and we welcome any genuine effort to document the suffering of survivors and bring their plight to global attention.

However, Amnesty International's report, "*No One Came to My Rescue*," while drawing long-overdue attention to serious abuses, raises profound concerns upon close examination. The report suffers from *methodological weakness, basic factual errors, and a singular focus* dangerously oversimplifies a complex conflict. Most critically, it fails to grapple with the well-documented phenomenon of armed actors impersonating the Oromo Liberation Army—a reality independently confirmed by The Washington Post, Reuters, and Ethiopia's own Human Rights Commission. When perpetrators cannot be reliably identified, accountability becomes impossible.

This gap does not diminish the suffering of survivors. On the contrary, it risks undermining their pursuit of justice by clouding attribution and allowing state-sponsored violence to be conveniently blamed on others. Survivors deserve more than global attention; they deserve reporting that meets the highest standards of accuracy and rigor. Anything less weakens the very cause it purports to serve.

**1. The Cardinal Sin: failing to identify the perpetrators and ignoring
"Counterfeit OLA" forces**

The most egregious failure of this report is its inability to properly identify the perpetrators. On page 15, Amnesty makes a devastating admission: "*We could not verify their identities at the time of publication.*" In such an investigation, if you cannot identify the perpetrator, you do not have a case. For a human rights report seeking to assign war crimes, this admission should have halted publication.

The existence of "*counterfeit OLA*" forces employed by the Ethiopian state is established fact. A Washington Post investigation revealed a counter-insurgent group actively posing as the OLA, led by a former prisoner with connection to government forces, which has been killing civilians—violence that is then blamed on the OLA. A Reuters investigation

uncovered the operations of the Koree Nageenyaa (Security Committee), a clandestine body of senior Oromia officials that has ordered extra-judicial killings and illegal detentions. Crucially, the investigation found that the massacre of the Karrayyuu Abba Gada leaders was orchestrated by these officials, who then instructed the Oromia Communication Bureau to attribute the killings to the OLA.

In the report, the survivors say that the perpetrators *wanted to be identified and explicitly told victims they were OLA* [p. 15]. This is a classic hallmark of a false flag operation. Why would actual OLA fighters, operating in their own strongholds, need to announce their identity as they commit crimes, and to villagers who would already know them? The behaviour described fits the precise profile of agents provocateurs sent by the state to commit atrocities and blame on the OLA.

By utterly ignoring this well-documented reality, Amnesty International is not just making a mistake; they are actively laundering the reputation of a state-sponsored death squad. They are taking the government's propaganda at face value and presenting it as human rights research.

2. The State Policy of "Draining the Sea": a confession ignored by the report

The report describes the expulsion of women and the burning of homes but fails to connect these actions to the explicit, publicized policy of the Ethiopian regime. Fekadu Tessema, the Oromia Prosperity Party chief until recently, publicly stated, "we have to drain the sea to catch the fishes." This is a publicly stated counter-insurgency doctrine that views the civilian population (the sea) as the support base for the OLA (the fish). The mass displacement, the burning of homes, and the terrorization of communities described in the report are a textbook implementation of a state policy designed to punish populations for alleged support of the OLA.

Amnesty's report, by blaming the OLA for this displacement, has effectively taken the confession of a senior government official and turned it into an indictment of his victims. The report's legal analysis, which claims "it is reasonable to believe that the armed group's fighters are using sexual violence to expel a section of the civilian population" [p. 23], is rendered absurd by the existence of a documented state policy with the exact same goal.

3. Shoddy research and factual errors that undermine its credibility

The report's credibility collapses under the weight of its own basic factual errors: errors on fundamental facts about the organization being accused. Mistakes of this magnitude suggest that the research was conducted with a stunning lack of rigor, or that it deliberately relied on flawed sources to build a narrative. Examples are legion:

- *"The OLA has five main commands"* [p. 11] – FALSE. The OLA has eight commands across Oromia.
- *"The Western command is led by Jal Gemechu Aboye"* [p. 11] – FALSE. Gemechu Aboye has never been the Western Commander.

- *"The Central Regional Command... is reported to be led by Jal Jiregna" [p. 11] – FALSE. The central command has never been led by anyone called Jaal Jiregna.*

If Amnesty International cannot accurately report the number of commands or the names of commanders, why should any reader trust their conclusions about specific acts of violence? This is not a minor oversight; it demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding of the subject they are investigating and casts yet another doubt on every single "finding" in the report.

4. The Selective Lens: ignoring the regime's overwhelming culpability

The report's focus solely on the OLA is a staggering act of omission. The conflict in Oromia is not a one-sided affair; it is a brutal war involving multiple actors, with the state bearing the overwhelming responsibility for violence.

- The United Nations investigation found that state forces (ENDF, police, and affiliated militias) were responsible for 70% of all human rights violations in Ethiopia in 2023, affecting 7,103 victims. All non-state armed groups accounted for only 22.3% .
- The UN also documented that between August and December 2023 alone, 18 drone strikes by the ENDF resulted in 248 civilian deaths and 55 injuries, destroying schools and hospitals.
- Other investigations by UN ICHREE have consistently indicated the disproportionate role of regime forces in the abuses.

Amnesty International is aware of these figures. They are public. Yet they chose to produce a report that effectively ignores the primary perpetrator of violence in the region. This effectively makes the report a political hit job, not human rights report. By singling out the OLA, Amnesty, wittingly or otherwise, seem to be providing cover for a state that has raped, killed and displaced far more civilians.

5. Methodology: remote research and unverified claims

Amnesty admits that the research was conducted in a context of a government-imposed communications blackout and restricted access [p. 11]. They conducted interviews via "encrypted communication apps" [p. 8].

In an environment of intense state surveillance and propaganda, where "counterfeit OLA" forces are actively trying to frame the OLA, relying on remote testimony without the ability to forensically verify the scene, the perpetrators, or the chain of command is a recipe for disaster.

The report is built on a foundation of sand. The victims' trauma is real, but the attribution of that trauma is based on the word of individuals in a war zone who are being terrorized by multiple regime forces, including those pretending to be the OLA. A responsible human rights organization would have paused, acknowledged the "unverified" status of the perpetrators, and investigated the role of state-sponsored imposters. Amnesty did the opposite: they rushed to print a headline that condemns the OLA and exonerates the regime.

Amnesty International's "*No One Came to My Rescue*" is a reckless and biased document that fails the standards of investigative rigor. By ignoring the well-documented existence of "counterfeit OLA" forces and the state's own policy of "draining the sea," by getting basic facts about the OLA's command structure wrong, and by ignoring UN data showing that the state is responsible for 70% of all abuses, Amnesty has produced a report that is as flawed as it is dangerous.

Wittingly or unwittingly, it provides diplomatic cover for a regime that tortures its citizens, runs secret death squads (Koree Nageenyaa), and kills civilians with drones on daily basis. It denies the OLA, a legitimate armed actor in a non-international armed conflict, as the report itself concludes, the presumption of a fair investigation. And worst of all, it weaponizes the trauma of ten women to serve a political narrative that lets the primary perpetrators of violence in Oromia—the Ethiopian regime and its proxies—off the hook. OLA request that the report be withdrawn, and its methodology be subjected to an independent audit.

6. Call for Independent Investigations

The Oromo Liberation Army has repeatedly called for independent investigations into several other serious crimes previously attributed to it. These calls have largely been dismissed or ignored by the Ethiopian regime and its backers.

This pattern of rejecting independent scrutiny reflects a broader policy posture by the regime, which has historically resisted international accountability mechanisms. Most notably, the regime mounted a sustained diplomatic campaign to terminate the mandate of the International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia at the United Nations Human Rights Council, effectively shutting down the body in the midst of its investigative work.

Against this backdrop, the OLA reiterates its call for comprehensive and genuinely independent investigations, not only into the latest allegations documented in western Oromia, but across all parts of the Oromia region where there is evidence of grave abuses committed. Ensuring justice for survivors requires a process that is independent, transparent, and capable of examining the actions of all actors involved in the conflict. Only through such an approach can accountability be established, disinformation avoided, and the dignity and rights of victims upheld.



OLF-OLA High Command

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